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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/23): PALESTINIAN NATIONAL
DIVISION - ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

Main Stories:

Al Quds and Al Ayyam newspapers lead with news that new Palestinian Authority elections is as an issue being discussed in Cairo. All front pages report that Hamas leader Misha'al has called for the whole-sale adoption of Egypt's unity proposal, whereas PLO Executive Committee member Yaser Abed Rabbo stated at an October 22 Ramallah press conference, that the proposal has sections that remain open to discussion and, "need more detail". Rabbo also called for a timetable for new PA elections, according to reporting.

Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with statements by Chief PLO negotiator Ahmad Quray insisting that no peace deal can be reached by the end of the year. His statements came during an October 22 press conference with French Foreign Minister Kushner in Paris. He blamed Israel for not reaching an agreement. In related reporting, Al Quds notes on its front page that Israel's President Peres will, "build on statements by Assistant Secretary of State David Welch," to approach his Egyptian counterpart about "collective" negotiations between Israel and Arab countries.

The three papers publish front page reports on the announcement of \$150 million in additional U.S budget support to the Palestinian Authority (PA), bringing U.S. assistance to the PA to more than \$700 million in 2008. Papers report that a ceremony was held on October 22 in Ramallah to announce the funding. U.S. Consul General Jake Wallis and USAID Director Howard Sumka stated that the U.S., "is happy to support the PA and enhance its efforts to secure economic and, eventually, political stability." PA Prime Minister Fayyad thanked the U.S. for its, "consistent support."

Al Ayyam publishes a prominent front page item on statements by Consulate General Jerusalem's Public Affairs Officer Micaela

Schweitzer-Bluhm "strongly" denying that there has been any contact between the U.S. Government, specifically Secretary Rice, and Hamas.

In photo coverage, the three papers publish front page photos of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad assisting farmers near Ramallah pick olives on October 22. Fayyad condemned recent Israeli settler attacks on olive farmers in the West Bank, saying, "this is nothing short of terrorism enacted by settlers." Al Ayyam leads with a photo of a teargas cloud disbursing Palestinians at Israel's Huwara checkpoint near Nablus. The accompanying story cites a World Bank report noting that the environment for investment in the Palestinian Territories remains "unfavorable" due to Israeli restrictions.

Al Quds runs front page statements by Hamas Spokesman Fawzi Barhum on October 23 about a, "so-called Palestinian Hizbollah" projectile attack on Israel. Hamas denies the existence of a faction by that name and claims the October 21 incident was an, "Israeli media fabrication" intended to justify the Gaza closures that began on October 22. In related reporting, Al Hayat Al Jadida notes Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov's comments from October 22 that the Gaza closures are, "unfruitful" adding that, "Gaza border smuggling tunnels have become an industrial zone, employing 20 to 25,000 people."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Abdullah Awwad opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "A calm

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discourse in a noisy moment (10/23): "All that can be said about the rift between Hamas and Fatah or between the Islamic movement and the nationalist one... is that it is a conflict between the West Bank and Gaza and the victims are the land [as politicians ignore Israeli settlement activities]... and the people... It is a conflict about privileges, seats and offices... Those in the West Bank and Gaza who support the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority (PA) have become more than 50% ...according to the polls ... support for the PA has dropped to less than 25%... those who feel harmed by the PA and the occupation are becoming the vast majority... The man on the street says that it is only a matter of time [before opposition to the PA]... explodes..."

¶2. Al Quds editorial is titled "School violence" and reacts to a recent incident at a Gaza school where a Hamas appointed substitute teacher who replaced a teacher on strike, caused a student to fall from the third floor (10/23): "[the] tragedy should be a wakeup call for all of us facing school violence, whether it be verbal, psychological or physical... respect should begin with the teachers and students themselves, and be cultivated within the family and society... the pieces are interrelated and affected by the general economic and political situation, the strikes and resulting chaos....if we value social stability than we should value the building of our nation even more."

Wallles